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ABSTRACT

The final report describes Project Interact, whose purpose was to assess potential means of increasing understanding among university students of the possible impact of handicapping conditions on relationships and economic management within families. The project carried out the following activities: (1) analyzed and disseminated findings of the research team's 1983-84 study of student attitudes toward the impact of differing abilities and handicaps on family relationships; (2) reviewed and evaluated available audio-visual materials and computer software relevant to the purpose of the project to determine suitability for use in higher education settings; and (3) developed an annotated bibliography of audiovisual materials. The rating scale used to rate materials is included, as is a listing of the mean ratings of the 13 films or filmstrips reviewed providing a total of 313 ratings. The lack of materials concerned with the handicapped in family relationships, especially sibling and spousal relationships and the lack of materials considering the economic impact of handicap on families are noted. (DB)

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INCREASING UNDERSTANDING OF THE IMPACT OF HANDICAPPING CONDITIONS ON FAMILIES

A final report submitted to the
Project Interact Advisory Council
by

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Abstract: The purpose of the study was to assess potential means of increasing understanding among university students of the possible impact of handicapping conditions on relationships and economic management within families. The project consisted of dissemination of findings of this research team's 1983-84 study, review of relevant audio-visual materials, and development of an annotated bibliography.

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I. RESEARCH PROBLEM

The purpose of the project was to assess potential means of increasing understanding among university students of the possible impact of handicapping conditions on relationships and economic management within families.

The findings of the Project Interact research study conducted by this team in 1983-84 indicated that significant differences in attitudes toward persons with handicapping conditions existed among university students. Attitudes toward persons who were blind, wheelchair-bound, deaf, or emotionally disturbed varied with the closeness of the situation and the degree of intimacy or family ties. Students generally expressed more negative attitudes toward persons with a handicap in close interpersonal situations (Collins, Watts & Morris, 1984).

There appeared to be a need to supplement the higher education curriculum with components focusing on handicapped family members. Students need to be aware of the possibility of a handicap occurring to themselves or a family member, along with the potential consequences and coping strategies. Examination of the potential impact on family relationships could include consideration of social, psychological, biological, economic, legal, ethical and moral factors. Alternative modes of managing family situations which involve a handicapped member could be explored. Courses in human development, family relationships and consumer education appear to be the logical ones in which to integrate this subject matter. However, resource materials which identify or illustrate these concepts are not easily located.

The project had three major goals. First, the extensive findings of this research team's 1983-84 study of attitudes toward the impact of differing abilities on family relationships were to be further analyzed and disseminated through the preparation of manuscripts for journal articles and proposals for conference presentations. Second, available audio-visual materials and computer software relevant to the purpose of this project would be reviewed and evaluated to determine suitability for use in higher education settings. Third, an annotated bibliography of audio-visual materials would be developed.

Dissemination of research data would provide a basis for curriculum development or revision. Relevant resources for facilitating the teaching/learning process need to be easily located in a convenient format. This project was intended to be of value to professionals who are teaching, counseling or doing research in related areas. Through dissemination of the 1983-84 study findings and the annotated bibliography, faculty and students at the University of Minnesota, Duluth and at other educational institutions could benefit from this project.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

The research literature on attitudes of college students toward relationships and economic factors in families with a handicapped member is sparse. Stovall and Sedlacek (1981) had findings similar to those of this research team regarding persons with a handicap. However, they investigated fewer family situations and only two handicaps, blind and wheelchair-bound. No bibliography or comprehensive catalog of audio-visual materials focusing on the impact of a handicap on family members was located.

Research literature which reported on the effects of handicapped persons on family members was reviewed for use in constructing the rating scale for this study. Studies reported by Earhart and Sporakowski (1984), Gallager, Beckman and Cross (1983), Grossman (1972), Longo and Bond (1984), Thompson and Doll (1982), and Wikler (1983) were particularly useful for this purpose.

III. METHOD

The general objective of the project was to assess potential means of increasing understanding among university students of the possible impact of handicapping conditions on relationships and economic management within families. The specific objectives were to (1) further analyze and disseminate findings of this research team's 1983-84 Project Interact study, (2) review and evaluate available audio-visual materials and computer software which was relevant to the purpose of the project, and (3) develop an annotated bibliography of materials and software.

Manuscripts were prepared by the research team to be submitted to professional journals. Proposals for conference presentations were prepared to be submitted in response to Requests for Proposals from professional organizations.

Commercial firms and agencies supplying audio-visual materials were sought to determine availability of relevant materials. Audio-visual materials which appeared to focus on handicapping conditions in family settings, such as dating, mate selection, marriage, parenting, and relationships with siblings or grandparents, allocation of resources and economic management were identified. Materials which were available for rental or free preview were ordered for review and evaluation by the project team. The number and type of rental materials ordered were limited by the project's budget.

A rating scale for use in evaluating the materials was developed by the project team, pilot-tested, and revised. The rating scale was constructed to include concepts suggested as important factors by research literature on the effects of a handicapped person on family members. Items included in the rating scale focused on realistic situations, practical and emotional problems, positive coping skills, satisfactions and normal lifestyles. Persons using the scale were to determine a rating within a five-point range for each of the six items in the scale, resulting in a total possible score of 30 points. The rating scale is presented in Table 1.

Table 1
RATING SCALE: HANDICAPPED MEMBERS OF A FAMILY

Title: _____

Circle a number to rate the film/filmstrip on the following criteria regarding handicapped family members. SD = Strongly Disagree; D = Disagree; N = Neutral; A = Agree; SA = Strongly Agree.

	SD	D	N	A	SA
1. The situations appeared to be realistic.	1	2	3	4	5
2. It made me aware of practical problems.	1	2	3	4	5
3. It made me aware of emotional reactions.	1	2	3	4	5
4. There was an emphasis on positive ways of coping.	1	2	3	4	5
5. It illustrated satisfactions involved.	1	2	3	4	5
6. It emphasized family members trying to attain a lifestyle close to the mainstream of society.	1	2	3	4	5

Total _____

Several audio-visual materials received for viewing were related to courses currently being taught by the project team and other college faculty at the University of Minnesota, Duluth. Selected college faculty were notified of the availability of these materials and had an opportunity to preview them. Selected materials were then viewed and evaluated in classes by both faculty and students.

A variety of sources were utilized to identify relevant audio-visual materials. Agency listings pertaining to specific handicaps, university library collections, and commercial sources were scanned to assess availability of materials for the annotated bibliography.

IV. FINDINGS

Data from this project team's 1983-84 study were subjected to further analysis. The findings have been incorporated into two manuscripts for dissemination through professional journals. A third manuscript related to the topic has been accepted for publication. Presentations of portions of the 1983-84 study and the present study findings have been given at three professional conferences. A proposal has been accepted for a presentation at a fourth conference. Further information on these activities is presented in Section VI of this report.

Audio-visual materials which examined the impact of a handicapped person on family relationships were reviewed by college faculty and students. Thirteen films or filmstrips were viewed and evaluated, providing a total of 313 ratings. The specific films/filmstrips and the mean ratings are presented in Table 2.

Table 2
MEAN RATINGS OF FILMS/FILMSTRIPS

Title*	$\bar{X}$**	n Raters
Born Dying	18.3	67
Family Crisis	21.8	22
Educational & Language Disabilities: The Families Responsibilities	20.7	30
Intellectual Disabilities: Educational Help	22.9	8
Intellectual Disabilities: Mental Retardation Is...	23.3	8
Intellectual Disabilities: Parental Involvement	24.6	9
Intellectual Disabilities: Recognizing the Symptoms	24.8	8
Intellectual Disabilities: The 5 Types of Service	23.8	8
Mimi: This Is Who I Am	27.0	28
Physical-Motor Development: Special Problems	21.5	19
Support From the Family: Parent to Child	25.1	35
Support From the Family: Parent to Parent	23.2	37
When "I've Told You A Thousand Times" Isn't Enough	23.4	34

* Sources of titles are listed in the annotated bibliography.
**Maximum rating = 30 points

An annotated bibliography of audio-visual materials which illustrate the impact of a handicapped person on family relationships was developed. The bibliography includes approximately 100 descriptions of films, filmstrips, and videotapes, along with acquisition information, addresses and telephone numbers of over 40 sources represented. No computer software which was relevant to the purpose of this project was identified. The annotated bibliography is available from the authors.

V. CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Acceptance of manuscripts for publication in professional journals and of proposals for presentation at professional conferences indicates a need and interest for dissemination of the study findings. Comments received after presentations showed interest by persons in a variety of related professions.

Students and faculty who viewed films and filmstrips portraying the impact of a handicapped member on other family members indicated an awareness of potential consequences. The range of ratings given the audio-visual materials indicates there is a variety in the comprehensiveness of topics illustrated in the materials. In informal discussion in classes after the viewings, many students expressed the thought that they had not considered the possibility or potential consequences of a member of their present or future family becoming handicapped. They also commented favorably regarding materials that showed positive ways of coping.

Locating relevant resources for the annotated bibliography was a challenge. The researchers conclude that there is an ongoing need to produce quality audio-visual and other educational support materials to assist families in ways of coping with the practical as well as emotional problems related to the presence of disabilities in families.

Although there appear to be numerous sources related to mainstreaming and other school, educational and counseling aspects, those resources which dealt with close family relationships were difficult to locate. The majority of the sources identified by the researchers were for intellectual, emotional and behavioral handicapping situations. Less attention was devoted to hearing, vision and other specific handicaps such as asthma, as measured by the ratio of resources focusing on these problems.

Attention in the sources reviewed was often focused toward the impact of handicapped children on parents. More attention needs to be given to the impact of a handicapped family member on siblings and spouses. The economic impact on families and how this affects ALL family members was seldom, if ever, explored.

Development of relevant, up-to-date films and other resources should be a continuing challenge for researchers, educators and other professionals who are concerned with all aspects of handicapping conditions and the impact these conditions have on family members. Focus on positive means of coping with psychological, social, economic and moral issues should be incorporated as well as attention to biological, physiological, physical and educational aspects of having a handicapped family member.

Incorporation of concepts related to the impact of handicapped members on the family is essential in the college curriculum. There are a variety of courses related to individual and family development where this incorporation can be initiated or further developed. The positive response from students indicates their willingness to deal with the issues as they pursue their preparation for personal or professional goals.

VI. DISSEMINATION PLANS

Three manuscripts which incorporate the findings of this project team's 1983-84 study or are related to the topic have been prepared. A manuscript entitled "Attitudes of University Students Toward Persons With Specific Handicaps" has been submitted for review to a professional journal. A second manuscript, "Attitudes Toward Family Members With Specific Handicaps," is in the final stages of preparation for submission to another professional journal. The third manuscript, "How Do Children With Disabilities Affect Families?" has been accepted for publication by Illinois Teacher.

Presentations of the 1983-84 and 1984-85 study findings have been given at three professional conferences: the Minnesota Home Economics Association Annual Convention, St. Cloud, MN, April 6, 1984 (refereed); the Minnesota Association for Counseling and Development Conference, Minneapolis, MN, February 8, 1985 (refereed); and the Project Interact Research Symposium, University of Minnesota, Duluth, MN, March 14, 1985. A proposal has been accepted for presentation at the American Home Economics Association Annual Meeting, Philadelphia, PA, June 25, 1985 (review board).

Dissemination of the annotated bibliography to interested professionals in education, counseling and social work is planned. Several inquiries for copies have already been received. A number of options for publication and dissemination are presently being explored and evaluated.

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